ABOUT THE CLASS / COURSE OBJECTIVES
The term “public relations” covers a wide range of communication and relationship building practices: it's strategic communication, it's advocacy/activism, and it's a major component of media content. By the end of the term, you should 1) have solid knowledge of concepts, terms, and practices of public relations in a variety of settings, 2) understand how public relations practice by organizations shapes contemporary culture, and 3) have experience analyzing public relations problems. Throughout the class we’ll balance two perspectives: as students, you will read academic research and journalistic accounts and ask questions about the role of public relations; as potential practitioners, you will read textbooks and industry publications to become familiar with the field.

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We will focus on these elements:

• explore the history and structure of media institutions as we see how pr practitioners interact with mass media
• explore the role of media (with a focus on the public relations practices of organizations) in shaping cultures;
• use mass communication theories and concepts in public relations planning and communication;
• look at the diverse global communities that are publics for contemporary organizations;
• conduct research and write an analysis of an organization’s publics, a media audit, and a case study;
• use creativity and independence to develop a communication plan.

READING
This is a breezy text that provides a broad context for the profession now. We’ll add to it in class and through reading in other books, journals, web as posted on ICON. You’ll also do regular reading and listening to keep up with news generally and in the media/pr industry.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN CLASS
A mixture of lecture and discussion with problem solving exercises, group work, guest speakers, and videos. You should prepare for class by reading assigned material from textbook, public relations trade publications, and other sources. Public relations practitioners must keep up with news and issues; classes will include discussion of current events. I will count on you all to make this a good class by being active participants. Ask questions, share your thoughts and reactions—tell a joke (and give me a break by laughing at my sorry attempts).
ASSIGNMENTS/EVALUATION

Exams and quizzes 225 pts (75/75/75)
Three exams cover lecture, reading, and discussion + current events. Exam format is short answer, matching terms, some multiple choice, short essay. If given, quizzes will contribute to exam points.

Public relations research and writing 150 pts
Analysis of publics (50) Research-based analysis of audiences for an organization of your choice.
Media audit (50) Systematic review of media coverage of an organization of your choice.
Case (50) Summary and analysis of a contemporary public relations problem/situation of your choice.

News/trends/media 25 pts
Set up news reader account (5)
Read/respond to longform piece (10)
News of the week (10)

Class preparation and participation 35 pts
Occasional short research / writing assignments to prepare for class discussion / in-class group work. (Must be in class to receive credit)

Total 435 pts / Final grade (A+ not used)
404 = A
391 = A-
378 = B+
361 = B
348 = B-
335 = C+
below 317 = C
below 304 = C-
below 291 = D+
below 274 = D
below 261 = D-
below 254 = D-
below 317 = F

EXAM AND ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

Exams must be taken as scheduled. If you have an unavoidable conflict, talk with me in advance. In an emergency or illness, be in touch as soon as you can, in advance if possible.

Please submit your work as specified for each assignment. For major writing assignments, you will upload a copy to an ICON dropbox and also turn in hard copy. In some cases, I will ask for hard copy OR ICON submission—read assignment carefully. Pages must be stapled. If not, I will base your grade on the first page. Unless I tell you otherwise, assignments must be typed. Please note: I will not accept assignments by e-mail.

Representing the work of someone else as your own or getting credit in two classes for the same work is academic dishonesty. While I encourage you to discuss assignments with others, I expect that anything you hand in is your own research, analysis, and writing. I expect that each person in a group has contributed equally and can provide a full description of his or her effort. Work for this class must be original—not revised versions of research or writing you have done or are doing for another class. Please talk with me if you have questions or want to discuss specific situations.

Late work is accepted only in cases of illness or other emergencies that you have discussed with me. Note: computer or printer problems do not count as emergencies; plan ahead; remember to back up your work.

Always keep a copy of your assignments. We all do our best, but papers or electronically submitted material can go astray. You are responsible for providing a copy if necessary.

Correct and careful writing is a basic expectation for all assignments.
ATTENDANCE AND CLASSROOM POLICIES

You are responsible for your attendance; I won't keep track. You will be most successful, of course, if you come to class regularly, on time, ready to be an active participant. Unannounced bonus points may be given for classroom activities.

You are responsible for all material, assignments, and schedule changes whether or not you attend class.

Please talk with me if class or an assignment conflicts with a religious observance.

I discourage students from using laptops or tablets during class and may sometimes ask they be closed. Studies show that students who use laptops in class get worse grades than those who don’t. A laptop or tablet is a distraction and a physical and psychological barrier between you and the rest of us. You are less likely to talk, less likely to pay attention to discussion, and less likely to remember what we do.

This will be an informal and, I hope, friendly and enjoyable class. Please respect your classmates, the J-School, and me by following these guidelines:

• no cell phones (that means turned off, put away, no checking messages or texting—really!)
• no food unless you bring enough to share (water, coffee, soda ok—don’t leave cups, cans)

If you need to use our class period for doing work for another course, reading the DI, you should do so—but please don’t come to class.

Arriving late or leaving early may occasionally be unavoidable, but please don’t make it a habit. If you have an on-going conflict with this class, please resolve it or drop the class.

UNIVERSITY / CLAS POLICIES

Administrative Home The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Electronic Communication University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

Accommodations for Disabilities A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College’s Code of Academic Honesty: “I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty.” Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar’s web site.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding Sexual Harassment Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the wellbeing of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.
Week of

THE BIG PICTURE

26 Jan  Intro to class / Definitions and basics / organizations/field
2 Feb  Publics and connections / Origins of public relations as a practice
9 Feb  Legal and ethical issues  (analysis of publics assignment due*)
16 Feb  Exam one*

PR OR STRAT COMM PLANNING PROCESS

23 Feb  Planning process / overview + research
2 Mar  Objectives/strategies
9 Mar  Communication / messages (media audit due*)
SPRING BREAK
23 Mar  Putting it together
30 Mar  Exam two*

PR IN ACTION

6 Apr  Corporate public relations / marketing communication, branding / promotion
13 Apr  Nonprofits
20 Apr  Investors / govt affairs
27 Apr  Exam three*
4 May  Group work and presentations (case analysis due*)

*Detailed reading and assignment schedules will be posted on ICON. Exam, assignment dates may be changed. You are responsible for all changes announced in class or posted on ICON.